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15

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PART 88.

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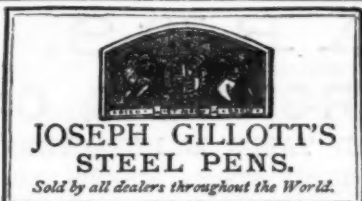
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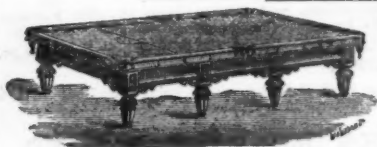


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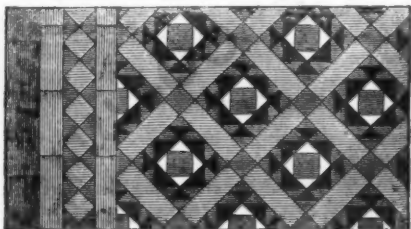
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PHOEBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND
MRS. TILLOTSON," &c. &c.

CHAPTER V. CONFIDENCES.

PHOEBE was at first inclined to attempt a coup de théâtre, and startle the pair by her sudden appearance, to the sound of a peal of laughter; but she felt the experiment would be dangerous. Instead, she quietly stole back, wondering, certainly, but rather wounded. She would have trusted all to the loyalty of her friend, and was much piqued at not being trusted with an adventure in which she would have been enchanted to co-operate. Before she went to bed that night, she was in her friend's room. She disdained—as some would have inclined to do—to invite the other into a trap by getting her to make excuses, or ambiguously account for her time during the evening, but at once began to reproach her.

"I thought you always told me everything," she said; "every secret, as I told you mine?"

Adelaide turned on her with a savage vivacity that almost scared Phoebe.

"So you have been spying on me? I insist on knowing what you know. If you have——"

The tender colour came into Phoebe's cheek. Her lips curled as by instinct.

"I have never spied on anyone—not in the way you mean. You should know me better than to say so. But—why should I not tell you the truth?—I did see you talking to a man at the garden-gate."

A look of anger and mortification came into Adelaide's face. Her haughty spirit seemed to be wrung at this discovery.

Perhaps she was humiliated at being thus detected, or at the advantage over her given to one who was so inferior.

"Surely you are not angry with me. How could I help being in the garden at that time? Why, I might just as well be angry with you for not trusting me!"

The other was looking at her steadily, as if trying to read in her eyes whether this statement was true. Gradually the look of distrust passed away. She was making up her mind to a resolution.

"Sometimes there are secrets too dangerous to be told. But now that you have my secret," continued Adelaide, "you know what I wished you not to know. But, mind, you were fairly warned."

This serious phrase, and, indeed, all serious phrases connected with responsibility, made Phoebe look grave, if not alarmed.

"Warned!" she repeated. "Why, what is there to be afraid of?"

"I mean you will have to be cautious; this is not a bit of fun, as you might think. That is what I want you to understand."

"But you could not think that I would betray you?" asked Phoebe gravely. "You know me too well for that."

In a matter-of-fact way the other insisted: "I want to put it beyond misunderstanding, once for all. I did not intend that you, or anyone in the school, should know of this; I do not wish that any one should be burdened with the responsibility of my secrets. It was your own act, recollect; and all I want to be understood now, once for all, is, that there must be no trifling with the matter. It is sport to you, but it may be death to me. There, we will leave the subject now."

This seemed rather hard and harsh to Phoebe, and for some time afterwards she felt a little wounded. She was puzzled, too, by the rather legal and official fashion in which the matter was defined. However, as nearly always occurred in such difficulties, she seized with welcome upon any solution that would bring back the old cheerful view of things. It occurred to her also that there must be much mortification for Adelaide, in being thus detected in the entanglement of the soft passion. Phoebe even felt full of pity and indulgence for her friend.

Adelaide, after an interval, felt that she had been almost too stern with this tender nature, and had compromised her unbending nature, by putting her caution in too harsh a shape. But, all the same, she was heartily mortified at a partnership which accident had thus forced upon her. She had, among her other plans, decreed that she should carry out her scheme alone and unassisted. If it succeeded, "well and good," it should come as a coup de théâtre upon them all—on the Misses Cooke, on the girls—who, at her departure, should cherish the tradition of her, as one who was able, by her strong mind and will, to control events. If it failed, it was ill and bad, and it jarred on her pride to think how she should have put herself in the power even of that trusting and admiring soul. Even though she herself were removed far away, and should not know how the news should be received, the notion of that levelling rankled in her heart. It will be thus seen that Adelaide's feelings towards Phoebe were of a curiously mixed kind, made up of some liking, some suspicion, and a dislike, if not a jealousy, of superiority. She was quick to detect that superiority of impulse, which was reckless of all calculations of self-interest, and would prompt to generous and unselfish actions that she could not dream of.

It was hard, however, to resist the good spirits and importunity of Phoebe, who, now, in possession of this tremendous secret, was tormented by a feverish desire to know all details. Her free inquiries were not to be restrained even by the cold reserve of her friend. She put questions of the most eager and impulsive kind, which were not to be put aside. Was he handsome? Oh, she was sure he was! Rich? Had he a fine place in the country—a nice name?

That last touch of the "nice name"

restored to Adelaide her sense of superiority. She became a little communicative.

"He is neither rich, nor beautiful, nor has he a nice name," she said. "I am no judge of such matters, as you know, especially of the last two. But he is a gentleman, and well connected; I want no more; for the tyranny here, the thought of being turned into a schoolmistress, becomes more and more odious to me every day."

"And how was it all managed? It seems wonderful, shut up here, and with Miss Cooke watching!" And Phoebe looked with genuine admiration at her friend, for she was thinking at that moment if any gallant and peerless gentleman had offered to whom she could give her heart, how in the wide world she could have contrived what the clever Adelaide had done.

"He has been about it a long time," went on Adelaide, "but I took no notice, until, as I say, this loathing began rising, rising every day like a tide. These Cooke women have lately wished to treat me as their property, in which they have invested so much, and as the time draws near for payment have grown arrogant. Then I began to think of him."

"But how?" repeated Phoebe, still intent on the mechanism of the adventure.

"Oh, that was easy," said the other; "that creature, Canova, would do anything for money or gentility. He carried the letters for me."

"How simple," thought Phoebe, "when once we come to know a thing." Still would she have thought of Canova?

"But how did it all come about?" she asked eagerly. "You didn't tell me that."

"You recollect the day I went with Emma Cooke, when she had to go and see the dentist? He was in the same carriage, opposite to me. It was only the week before that they had insulted me—these two women, I mean—and I had made up my mind for good and all to be a dependent no longer. This was the first chance that offered, and I did not let it pass, I promise you. We were not half an hour in the train, and before he left it, I had made my impression. When I set my mind on a thing, it somehow surely comes about, as you know, Phoebe."

"It is indeed most wonderful," said Phoebe, suddenly grave. "I assure you, it has often seemed to me like some kind of magic power."

"Nothing of the kind," said the other. "It is simply resolution, which always

finds ways and means. The thing was done when he left us. I said he should like me, and, what is more, he shall marry me, too, though he may not intend it now."

Phoebe started. In all this there appeared to be something brutal, something that trampled through the gossamer network of romance that hung about her. The distinction as to loving, with the possibility of not marrying, was bewildering.

"Why if he will marry you? Is it not what he would wish, when he loves you?"

"Of course," said Adelaide, carelessly, "but still I shall make it a certainty. I daresay he thinks he can amuse himself with a poor girl like me, who has no one to protect her. 'I love and I ride away,' like the shabby fellow in the song. It would be a disagreeable surprise to find himself held by the bridle."

Phoebe laughed at this picture, and then became grave.

"If he were that kind of character," she said, "he would not be the man to love. I would scorn, hate, and detest him. I wish I could see him, I would tell him what you are—what a noble, generous nature yours is, and how you have been treated here."

Adelaide looked at her sharply.

"You would wish to see him? There is no need of that—for the present, at least. Perhaps I am too boastful, and it may not come to anything. Now I must go back to their Dacirian humbug, as I call it. For I mean to spring a mine on them there too. They don't intend to let me get it, I can see; they want it for that aristocrat, Clinton, to be given in presence of the mamma and papa, and increase the connection."

Miss Cross was unusually bitter this morning; but there was truth in her speculation. The Misses Cooke did not desire that so high an honour should be thrown away on the mere cheap drudges of the school. They were eager that the other candidate, the Honourable Millicent Clinton, who had some cleverness, should, in presence of a congenially fashionable assemblage, as just pictured, receive it from the hands of the amiable Dr. Drinkwater, and thus "increase the connection."

Though Ada had been thus confidential, Phoebe noticed that she grew reserved on the grand subject, as though she felt she had been too communicative. Gradually Phoebe began to think that the affair had "gone off," or that the lover had withdrawn, and was thereupon too delicate to think of paining her friend by questions.

It was, however, a great disappointment to her, as she would have "given worlds" to be allowed to discuss this delicious subject in all its bearings and details. Adelaide said that he had gone away, that he would not be back for some weeks, and then that she hardly knew what turn the matter would take. Phoebe was certain "in her own mind"—a locality in which she was fond of laying the scene of a great many little operations—that there had been a quarrel, and was deeply grieved.

CHAPTER VI. THE MATRON.

AN important functionary in the establishment was a dry, sour lady, who filled the office of housekeeper, giving out linen, &c., but who acted as sergeant, under her officer, Miss Emma Cooke, and bore the more dignified title of "the matron." This person was styled "Corbett" by the young ladies, with whom she was in perpetual warfare. Her peculiarities were often a fertile source of inspiration for Phoebe's powers of delineation, and for Phoebe she had a rooted dislike. She was of very plain exterior, with a dry, grating precision, on which the young girl used to rally her with a sparkling but good-natured pleasantry which it was difficult to resent. Even the decorous Miss Emma used to relax into a smile when complaint was made.

The austere matron found her refuge, as such persons often do, in grim prophecy; bidding people, not very distinctly particularised, "wait and see," and that when that girl had brought scandal on the place her warnings might be remembered. But a freak on the part of Miss Phoebe had developed what was merely dislike and contempt into a deep-seated hatred, and a fixed determination to be "down on her" at the first opportunity.

Phoebe had one day noticed that the keys were left in her door, and, at the head of a small band of irregulars, who admired her daring, and were ready to follow, though they could not lead, determined to enter and commit some piratical excess. Enchanted at the opportunity, she made her dispositions, posted sentries, and led in her party. The room offered nothing to compensate for the danger of the feat, though it and its various objects had a sort of mysterious attraction which at schools seem to attach to all the objects belonging to persons in authority. They turned everything over in guilty haste. A weak sister proposed the unmeaning

vengeance of upsetting the ink-bottle over the papers, just as Indians might burn a wigwam, as a memorial of their visit; but Phoebe, with higher instinct, suggested dressing up a bundle with nightcap, &c., and putting it on the bed. Suddenly a cupboard attracted attention, in which the key was left. It was promptly opened by Phoebe, who thereupon prosecuted a search in person. In an instant she reappeared, waving triumphantly an article which certainly offered damning evidence in support of an unworthy prejudice that had long obtained among the girls in reference to "Corbett's" habits. This was a slender flask, decorated with one of those flaunting labels which are associated with the stimulating produce of Cognac. This piece of conviction was received with a scream of delight, and from that moment the matron's character was hopelessly gone.

Suddenly the sound of steps were heard, and a panic ensued. They would all be captured together, as in a net. The sentry had proved false, or had been herself surprised. Phoebe alone drew up, threw her head back, and prepared for battle; the rest gathered in a corner, a frightened herd.

It was only Adelaide. There was a general cry of relief; she guessed what was on foot at once.

"Look here, Ada! Such a discovery! Shall we leave it at Miss Cooke's door?"

"Capital!" said some of the other girls; "that will expose her. Do it to-night, Phoebe."

It was understood, as a matter of course, that all such services of danger must be done by the gallant Phoebe.

She was nothing loath, and was securing the flask when Adelaide interposed.

"That would be utterly meaningless," she said, in her coldest way. "You have an opportunity," she added, suddenly, "to expose the woman's failing, and let her know that you know; that will be quite enough. We all know that she is not quite as perfect as she wants to appear. It will humiliate her sufficiently if you let her, and her alone, see that we have her secret."

Without condescending to say more, or to wait and see the result of the experiment, Adelaide slowly quitted the room, with the air as though she had suggested what was merely an act of duty.

With the quickness of genius the plan flashed upon Phoebe's brain. It would

be free from detection, and at the same time inflict exquisite mortification upon her enemy, who would learn that her secret failing was discovered, and at the same time be compelled to remain silent on the matter. The flask was hurriedly wrapped up in some articles of clothing so as to assume something of the size of a human head, and was then invested with a nightcap, and the whole placed in Mrs. Corbett's bed; the face, or what answered for the face, turned to the wall.

The anticipations of the discovery that would ensue, and the compound emotions to which the victim would become a prey, were exquisite. Strange, sudden bursts of laughter, and eyes too significantly anticipating mischief, almost betrayed the members of the little gang during the day.

What Mrs. Corbett did experience was never known; but Phoebe, who almost challenged her gaze, laughed with a good-natured insolence. It was certain, too, that even the principal herself had an inkling of what had taken place. Miss Emma, of course, knew everything that occurred among the girls, just as the sergeant learns what is going on among the men; and, strange to say, the awful chief of the house was not displeased at discovering this lapse from virtue in her trusted assistant, who had hitherto presumed on a Spartan immunity from all the weaknesses of our nature. Mrs. Corbett would have been more than human if she forgave this wrong, or was not eager to have Phoebe "on the hip."

A week or two more passed by, and somehow it seemed that the Misses Cooke began to have some dim foreboding of the impending desertion of the most useful of their pupils, and began at last to be piqued by her hostility. Miss Emma grew sour, "short," and unaccommodating. She seemed to be on the look-out for causes of quarrel; she was stern, and entered into no discussion, but "required the thing to be done" in an arbitrary, autocratic way. Once she said it was time they came to an understanding. The pupil continued to bear herself with the same quiet insolence, and a sarcasm of manner more irritating than sarcasm in words.

One evening it came to pass that Miss Cross was publicly ordered to her room, into confinement until further notice, until it should be considered what should be done with her—whether the Venerable Dean Drinkwater should be called to administer his regular treatment—i.e., a

summons to the "strangers' parlour" for an interview with this ecclesiastical patron (the Misses Drinkwater had been "finished" at a reduction of premium), or whether she should be sent away. But this step could not be profitably taken, as the sisters had sunk too much in the investment. What really inflamed the resentment of the heads of the house, was the discovery of Adelaide's determination to compete seriously for, which was tantamount to winning, the Dacier medal. Their annoyance at this resolve was inconceivable, as there was no way of defeating it. For the examination was usually conducted with an ostentatious air of impartiality, Dr. Drinkwater and "a Fellow of All Souls" being specially retained to set papers to the young ladies—that is, to all in the school who presented themselves. So at a fashionable bazaar some engaging young shopwoman feels a similar vexation when there is "a tie" between an aristocratic patron and some obscure clerk, who have both thrown for the prize in her lottery. Interest, inclination, all prompt her to a little hocus pocus in favour of the more desirable candidate. Miss Cooke told her pupil plainly that she should not be allowed to enter for this honour, and was told in reply that if there was any attempt to prevent her obtaining the reward due to her merits, she would appeal to the public on the day of exhibition. This bold and terrible speech was properly looked upon as "a burning of her ships," and a plain declaration of war to the knife.

It was on interchange of sharp language that Miss Cross was ordered to her room—into confinement for the evening. The young lady gathered up her books and retired. Phoebe was indignant and excited, and all through the afternoon was acting as a little incendiary, trying to inflame the popular passions and stir up something like a riot. If "No tyranny!" or "Too many Cookes spoil the soup," or some other galling reproach were but written on a small placard, she volunteered to affix it, like some petard, to the door of the obnoxious lady's room.

But the crowd was not to be stimulated to such an outrage; for the high-bred young ladies had but little sympathy with their persecuted sister, who was looked on as a sort of low Radical, much as their papas looked on the spouting workmen who led the trades-union of the district. Phoebe, indeed, was often thought to have compromised herself by her wholesale

alliance with her inappropriate companion. She was considered something "plebeian" in her tastes—but the truth was she delighted in a bit of nature, or cleverness, or freedom, and this was her way of making protest against the stiff ordinances of fashion, which she flung off as impetuously as she did the fashionable strait-waistcoat which Madame Jeannette, of Regent-street, who undertook the "shape" of the young ladies, had tried to fit on her.

So all that evening Phoebe was thinking of the "poor prisoner," and inveighing against her "jailors."

As a matter of course, she had contrived, through the agency of a maid "who would do anything for Miss Phoebe," a visit to her friend in her dungeon. This gallant attempt, which involved serious risk, was made light of by Phoebe. The other was not a little softened, and kissed her with as much warmth as was consistent with her nature.

"It's a shame!" said Phoebe with glowing cheeks; "such a mean, unworthy persecution! Never mind, it can only last a short time. When you are married and have your carriage—they will die of spite and vexation. Would I not give worlds to be by when they hear the news!"

Thinking this the best comfort she could offer, Phoebe was astonished to see her friend rise and, with a burst of impatience, walk over to the window.

"That will be all at an end after to-night," she said. "He was to have been there to-night, at nine o'clock. Now, he will never come again. I care not."

"How dreadful," said Phoebe. "Still he will know that something has prevented you—"

"No," said the other, quite calmly; "he is so sensitive and vain, that he will prefer to take offence, as he did a short time ago. He only wants the excuse."

"Then he is not worth having," said Phoebe, impetuously.

"Perhaps not, for himself," said Adelaide. "But I cannot afford to be nice in my selection. There is a class you have heard of who are not allowed to be choosers. I may tell you that, not long ago, he was taking airs and patronising me as a poor girl, and I spoke my mind to him. He was affronted, and left me. Then I thought, as I said, that I was not a person entitled to the luxury of quarrelling or taking offence, so it cost me infinite trouble to bring him back. He is fickle and touchy; his vanity will be wounded at what he will

consider disrespect—I can't help it. It is another little item of the debt I owe Miss Cooke."

"So it has been going on all this time?" said Phoebe. "And you never told me. How close you are!"

A plan was lighting up in Phoebe's eyes.

"Write him a note," said she, "and I shall be postman!"

Adelaide grew hard in a moment.

"I never leave anything to anyone; but I am obliged to you all the same. As I say, the thing must take its chance now. Understand me, I wish no one to interfere in the matter."

"Oh, certainly," said Phoebe, her enthusiasm at once checked. "I thought I might help you. Is there anything else that I can do?"

"Nothing. You will understand me; and I really thank you for what you propose, but in this sort of thing I prefer to depend upon myself."

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

SIR HENRY MORGAN.

It is interesting to trace the degeneration of the gentleman adventurer, of the period of the Renaissance, into the buccaneer and pirate. The former was a potential pirate, whose predatory habits were glossed over by the fame of the explorer or dignified by the steady purpose of the patriot. He was a higher development of the pirate pure and simple—the plundering, burning, and destroying Northman, a sea-robber, only occasionally great enough to advance from simple plunder to actual conquest. It was only by slow degrees that piracy took the heroic form manifested by Drake and his brave contemporaries. The heroic period did not last long, but the primeval instinct of piracy survived; the explorer, the gentleman adventurer, the gallant defender of his country, swiftly sank, first into the buccaneer, and then into the pirate, until the motto of "No peace beyond the line" was exchanged for the black flag of the marine Ishmael—who plundered, tortured, and murdered right and left, and spent his ill-gotten gains in hideous debauchery, and extravagance as devoid of elegance as were his exploits of any gleam of chivalry. I would that it were otherwise; but truth compels me to admit that, after an attentive study of the lives of the buccaneers, I can find but two good points about them—personal courage of the most reckless kind, and a

fertility of resource which frequently extorts unwilling admiration. Ashore or afloat they engaged their prey, the Spaniard, without any reference to numbers, and, so far as can be ascertained, with very general success. In these days of discipline and arms of precision, it appears to us astounding that a rabble of desperadoes should have stormed fortified cities, and defeated in pitched battles the soldiery of Spain, often against the most tremendous odds. But the facts remain. Over natural and artificial obstacles the genius of the buccaneers triumphed, until their name became a terror to the well-garrisoned towns of the Spanish Main, and heavily-armed galleons slunk away in affright at the whisper that they were on the war-path. Perhaps the horrible tortures they inflicted on their prisoners had something to do with establishing this panic; but, in judging them on this score, we must recollect that they did not invent the torture. In the early days of American adventure, the Spanish possessors of the country had consigned many of their prisoners to the dungeons of the Inquisition, and it was hardly to be expected that the later marauders should forget that their predecessors had been tortured as heretics, instead of being hanged as pirates. If, however, the miseries inflicted on the inhabitants of the sea-board by the buccaneers are to be regarded as a species of retribution, it must at least be admitted that it was terrible and complete.

The great buccaneering period may be roughly said to have extended over the latter half of the seventeenth century, while the enterprises of the freebooters were assisted by the wars fomented by Louis the Fourteenth. Those among them who stood upon ceremony obtained letters of marque, and then went to work with a will; while others, who were less imbued with respect for technicalities, fought and plundered "for their own hand." In the histories of the buccaneers, as written by themselves, a sort of case is made out for them. They were originally the hunters of Hispaniola, and their name is derived from the boucan, or dried meat, which they prepared from the wild cattle. They were rough fellows these hunters, and vendors of hides and beef, living in the woods for months together, and conducting themselves, after they had sold their produce, very much in the fashion of the logwood-cutters described by Dampier.

These amiable colonists were by no means to the taste of the Spaniards, who did their best to drive them off. The French were at this time attempting to establish plantations in Tortuga, and to that end endeavoured to bring the early planters and hunters of that island, and of Hispaniola, under something approaching law and order. The consequences of this attempt were disastrous. Hunters and planters made common cause against their new masters, and being crushed by the strong hand, betook themselves to piracy. Tortuga, and, at a later date, Jamaica, became a nest of pirates, who had, according to their own account, been driven to evil courses by ill-treatment. Pierre le Grand, a Frenchman, and Bartholomew Portuguese, were the first great leaders of the so-called buccaneers. Commencing with a boat, they boarded ships, and with these took other ships, until they at length commanded little fleets, and spread devastation far and wide. Rock Brasiliano was also a notable buccaneer of the early period. This worthy was a Dutchman, who obtained his cognomen by a long residence in Brazil. Flying thence to Jamaica, when the Portuguese retook Brazil from the Dutch, he entered a "society of pirates;" and after part of the crew of the ship quarrelled with the captain, and set off in a boat, was chosen the captain of the malcontents, who, fitting out a small vessel, speedily took a great plate ship. This action gained him great reputation, but "in his private affairs he governed himself very ill; for he would oftentimes appear brutish and foolish; when in drink, running up and down the streets, beating or wounding those he met; no person daring to make any resistance." He had an inveterate hatred against the Spaniards, never showing them any mercy, and "commanded several to be roasted alive, for not shewing him Hog-yards, where he might steal swine"—pork and turtle being the favourite food of the buccaneers, as punch and brandy were their drink. The exploits and cruelties of Rock Brasiliano were soon eclipsed by François Lolonois—so called from his being a native of Les Sables d'Olonne. His atrocities will not bear repetition, and made the Spaniards shudder at his name, until he came to what his biographer calls, with grim humour, "his unfortunate death." After commanding fleets and sacking cities, he at last fell into the hands of the Indians

of Darien, who "tore him in pieces alive, throwing his Body limb by limb into the fire, and his Ashes into the Air, that no trace nor memory might remain of such an infamous inhuman Creature." The first honours (?) of buccaneering were thus gained by French, Dutch, and Portuguese, but the credit of producing the greatest buccaneer of them all belongs to the English, "a nation apt to piracy."

Captain—afterwards Sir Henry—Morgan, was a buccaneer or pirate, whichever the reader pleases, who narrowly missed, in the West, a career equal in notoriety to that enjoyed by Barbarossa in the Mediterranean. His dream was the foundation of a buccaneer state, a sort of Saltee or Algiers, on the Spanish Main; but whatever may have been his chances of succeeding in this project, they were ruined by the anxiety of the great representative buccaneer to take care of himself. His portrait is now before me—the image of a bluff cavalier, of the reign of his most gracious majesty King Charles the Second. A square head, with hair parted in the midst, and falling in long love-locks over the shoulders—the coiffure preceding the full-bottomed wig—a long straight nose, large eyes set wide apart, a well-cut upper and a thick, heavy, sensual under lip. A moustache, curled upward, gives a jaunty expression to an otherwise heavy-looking countenance, resting on a square-cut jaw and double chin. Altogether it is a face of power. Not delicate, not sympathetic, not intellectual; but simply strong, resolute, and steadfast. The bull neck is encircled by a cravat of the richest lace; the heavy shoulders and deep chest are clothed in cloth of gold—"lifted" probably from some mighty galleon; the arms enjoy exceptional freedom by reason of the sleeves being slashed with white, satin. Across the shoulder hangs a richly-decorated sword-belt, holding the victorious cutlass of the rover. The background of this pleasant picture is appropriately filled in with a sketch of a burning town and sinking fleet.

Henry Morgan was one of those who, having been shorn themselves to begin with, pass the remainder of their lives in flaying others. The son of a rich Welsh yeoman, he found little pleasure or prospect of advancement in his father's calling, and sought the sea-coast in quest of more congenial occupation. Finding several ships at anchor bound for Barbadoes, he took service in one of these, and

became the victim of a custom then prevailing. He was sold by his captain as soon as he came ashore. In the gay days succeeding the Restoration, and for long afterwards, this practice of engaging or kidnapping English folk and selling them as slaves in his majesty's plantations was, if not sanctioned by authority, quietly connived at. The lot of the men sold for a term of years was hard enough if they fell into the hands of a violent master. As people dined early, and generally got more or less intoxicated at dinner, the slightest blunder was often punished with tremendous severity. Besides the punishment of "cat-hauling"—which consisted in fixing a cat on the shoulders of a naked man, and then dragging the animal by the tail, struggling with tooth and nail, downwards to his feet—it was not unusual to lash the unhappy white slaves till they were nearly dead, and then anoint their wounds with lemon-juice mixed with salt and pepper. There is no record of how Morgan fared under his Barbadian master; but if conclusions may be drawn from his subsequent career, he was so ill-treated as to extinguish in him all pity and sympathy for his fellow-creatures. Having served his time at Barbadoes, and succeeded in obtaining his liberty, he hied him to Jamaica, there to seek new fortunes. Finding himself adrift without employment, and two piratical vessels just ready to put to sea, he at once commenced a career which has left an evil scent of blood and fire on the isthmus of Panama. He soon fell in with his new comrades' manner of living, and "so exactly, that, having performed three or four voyages with profit and success, he agreed with some of his comrades, who had got by the same voyages a little money, to joyn stocks and buy a Ship. The vessel being bought, they unanimously chose him captain and commander."

On the coasts of Campeachy, Morgan and his comrades took many vessels, and then fell in with Mansvelt, an ancient buccaneer, who was then busy in equipping a fleet with the design to land on the continent, and "pillage whatever he could." Morgan's handsome string of prizes impressed the "old hand" with an idea of his genius, and made him at once vice-admiral in the expedition. With fifteen ships, "great and small," and five hundred men—Walloons and French—they sailed from Jamaica, and took and sacked the island of St. Catherine, near Costa Rica. The buccaneers were exceedingly anxious

to preserve St. Catherine as a piratical stronghold, but not proving strong enough to hold their own there, they proposed to attack Havana itself. Finding their force insufficient for this daring adventure, they fell upon Puerto el Principe, and took it; but, being disgusted at the small amount of the plunder, quarrelled among themselves. The ancient feud between the English and French broke out anew, and the freebooters parted company, Morgan determining to try his fortunes at the head of his own countrymen. Collecting nine ships and four hundred and sixty men, he put to sea, telling no man of his destination. On approaching Costa Rica he declared his intention of attacking Puerto Velo. This enterprise could not, he thought, fail, "seeing he had kept it a secret; whereby they could not have notice of his coming." Many murmured against him, alleging that they had not sufficient force to assault so strong and great a city, whereupon Morgan made a memorable and characteristic speech: "If our number is small our hearts are great. And the fewer persons we are the more union and better shares we shall have in the spoil." Puerto Velo—not far from Nombre di Dios, the scene of one of Drake's exploits—was considered the strongest place held by the Spaniards in the West Indies, excepting only Havana and Cartagena. It was defended by two castles, and a garrison of three hundred soldiers. It was a sort of Atlantic port for Panama, and was rich in plate and slaves. One after the other the castles were taken after a desperate defence, and many of the "chiefest citizens were made prisoners." But the town still held out. Morgan now ordered ten or twelve ladders to be made of such breadth that three or four men at once might ascend by them. When these were ready, he commanded "all the religious men and women whom he had taken prisoners to fix them against the walls." The unfortunate monks and nuns, driven on by the buccaneers, found no mercy from their own people, who fired on them remorselessly. Ultimately, the buccaneers took the town, the governor, who conducted himself valiantly throughout, dying sword in hand. As was usual in these cases, the place was sacked, the prisoners put to the rack to make them reveal their real or supposed hidden treasures, and a ransom of a hundred thousand pieces of eight was demanded on pain of the town being burnt. The governor of Panama, incensed at the

outrage on Puerto Velo, sent a detachment to demolish the buccaneers; but the latter made short work of the Spanish troops, whereat the governor, in a sort of anti-climax, threatened the marauders with high pains and penalties unless they should presently depart from Puerto Velo. Morgan replied that, unless "the contribution-money were paid down, he would certainly burn the whole city, and then leave it, demolishing beforehand the castles and killing the prisoners." In a few days the ransom was paid, but the president of Panama was so amazed that some four hundred men should take a city defended by castles, without having ordinance to raise batteries, that he sent to Captain Morgan "desiring some small pattern of those arms, wherewith he had taken, with such vigor, so great a city." Morgan received the messenger "very kindly and with great civility," and gave him a pistol and a few small bullets to carry back to his master, telling him withal, "He desired him to accept that slender pattern of the arms wherewith he had taken Puerto Velo, and keep them for a twelvemonth, after which time he promised to come to Panama and fetch them away." The Spaniard quickly returned the ill-omened present to Morgan, thanking him for lending him "weapons that he needed not," and sent him withal a gold ring with this message—"That he desired him not to give himself the labour of coming to Panama as he had done to Puerto Velo, for he did assure him he should not speed so well here as he had done there."

After sacking various cities, notably Maraicaybo, and leading the Spaniards a terrible life generally, Morgan collected together an army of well-seasoned buccaneers of all nations, principally English, and prepared to put into execution the campaign attempted in vain by Oxenham, his precursor, and by Sawkins and others, his degenerate descendants. As preliminaries to the great venture the island of St. Catherine was taken, and subsequently the castle of Chagres. At the latter place the Spaniards defended themselves "very briskly," keeping up a heavy fire, and crying out, "Come on, ye English dogs, enemies to God and our king, let your other companions that are behind come on, too; ye shall not go to Panama, this bout." Some desperate fighting occurred here, the Spaniards defending themselves right valiantly. The buc-

caneers were driven back again and again, but yet came up to the attack with undiminished vigour, hurling their fire-pots among their enemies, who responded with like missiles, until, as the buccaneers were getting roughly handled, "there happened a remarkable accident which occasioned their victory. One of the pirates being wounded by an arrow in the back, which pierced his body through, he pulled it out boldly at the side of his breast, and, winding a little cotton about it, he put it into his musket and shot it back to the castle. But the cotton, being kindled by the powder, fired two or three houses in the castle, being thatched with palm-leaves, which the Spaniards perceived not so soon as was necessary." A tremendous explosion ensued, which threw the Spaniards into confusion; and the pirates, having burnt their way through the stockades, at last captured the castle, with a loss of one hundred killed, besides seventy wounded. On the 18th day of August, 1670, Captain Morgan set forth from the castle of Chagres with twelve hundred men, five boats with artillery, and thirty-two canoes. Working their way up the river, the little army made only six leagues on the first day, and came to "a spot called de los Braços." Here they went ashore to stretch their limbs, crippled in the crowded boats, and skirmished round the country in search of provisions. But they found none, as the Spaniards, advised of their arrival, carried everything off, and the greater part were thus forced to pass the night "with only a pipe of tobacco," by way of refreshment. The river being very low, they were obliged to leave their boats at the conclusion of the next day. The genius of organisation had not forsaken them, for they left a hundred and sixty men to guard the boats and secure their retreat, while the main body pushed on across the isthmus, still working with such few canoes as were able by their light draught to pass up the river, encumbered by shoals and those impediments known in the Mississippi as snags and sawyers. Everywhere they found the country denuded of all kinds of provisions, and as buccaneers were accustomed to victual on the enemy, they were soon reduced to sore straits. On the fourth day—according to an eye-witness and comrade—"the ferment of their stomachs was now so sharp as to gnaw their very bowels." Nevertheless, they were nothing daunted, and, finding a heap

of leather bags, devoured them for want of anything better. For the information of those curious in cookery, it may be well to show how they treated this very unpromising food. First they sliced it in pieces, then they beat it between two stones, and rubbed it, often dipping it in water to make it supple and tender. "Lastly, they scraped off the hair and broyl'd it." Being thus cooked, they cut it into small morsels and ate it, helping it down with frequent gulps of water, which, by good fortune, they had at hand. On the ninth day they, more than half-starved and worn out with fatigue and fasting, descried the highest steeple of Panama, and at once threw up their hats for joy, as if the campaign were over, and the riches of the city were already theirs. The Spaniards appear to have been rather slow in going to work. To begin with, they made a great show of blockading the buccaneers in their temporary encampment, and laid many ambuscades to open fire as they approached the city. But Morgan had good guides, and by the advice of one of them, tried "another way." Hence the Spaniards were compelled to leave their breastworks and batteries, and come out to meet them in the open, with two squadrons of cavalry, four regiments of foot, and a huge number of wild bulls, driven on by innumerable negroes and Indians. When the buccaneers saw the opposing force, "few or none but wished themselves at home," but after some wavering, they made up their minds to "fight resolutely, or die, for no Quarter could be expected from an Enemy, on whom they had committed so many Cruelties." Occupying a little hill, they sent forward two hundred of their best marksmen. Descending the hill, this detachment marched straight upon the Spaniards, who awaited them firmly enough, but could not make much use of their cavalry—on account of the field being full of "quaggs." The two hundred buccaneers, putting one knee on the ground, began the battle with "a full volley of shot." An attempt was then made to throw the marauders into disorder by driving the wild bulls against them, but the animals took fright and ran away—the few who rushed among the buccaneers being instantly shot. The Spanish horse being discomfited, the foot threw down their arms and ran away to shelter themselves in the town. There an obstinate resistance was made, but in

spite of barricades, cannon, and men, the fury of the buccaneers prevailed, although their numbers were considerably thinned in the assault. The town taken, Morgan forbade his men to touch any wine, saying he had intelligence that it was all poisoned—his real fear being, that if his men were not restrained, they would become frightfully intoxicated, and prove an easy prey to the enemy. The work of plunder and destruction now commenced. Churches and monasteries, warehouses and palaces, were sacked and burnt; but as the inhabitants had hidden their valuables, and run away into the woods, the buccaneers had some difficulty in getting their booty together. To expedite this important part of the business, they made excursions into the country, seized as many of the inhabitants as they could find, and put them to most "exquisite tortures to make them confess both other people's goods and their own." The ruffians racked and roasted their unhappy prisoners, and occasionally applied a peculiar torture—twisting a cord round the forehead of a prisoner "till his eyes appeared as big as eggs, and were ready to fall out." They spared neither age nor sex, and one shudders to think of the fate of the many beautiful women who fell into their hands. Morgan himself was peculiarly susceptible to the attractions of the fair sex. Among the unfortunate prisoners was the wife of a Spanish merchant, a woman of singular beauty, with raven hair, and a dazzling complexion. The buccaneer leader fell in love with the lady, who had been told, like other Spanish women, by husbands and priests, that buccaneers were not men, but "heretics," monstrous beasts, fearful to look upon. The young Spaniard was therefore agreeably surprised to find that her captors were "men like Spaniards after all." Her joy at finding herself in the hands of buccaneers rather than wild beasts was premature. For a while all went well; but having received Morgan's advances coldly, she soon became aware of the real character of the man. It is hardly unfair to the memory of this great freebooter to say that in him were epitomised all the vices of generations of buccaneers and pirates. He was cruel, tyrannical, and sensual; avicious and faithless even to his own comrades. He pressed his suit, offering to pour all the wealth of the Indies at the feet of the beautiful Spaniard, if she would consent to his wishes. She refused him

absolutely, and threatened to kill him or herself with her poniard if he came near her. Morgan was furious, but found in gratified cupidity a solace for disappointed love. The lady was flung into a dark cellar, and informed that unless thirty thousand pieces of eight were paid for her ransom she should be sold as a slave in Jamaica. As the buccaneering army commenced its march from Panama laden with plunder, the beautiful prisoner was led apart from the rest between two buccaneers. The triumphant army carried off from the burned and ruined city one hundred and seventy-five horses and mules laden with gold, silver, and jewels, and five or six hundred prisoners, men and women, to whom Morgan replied that they, unless they were ransomed, should assuredly all be sold into slavery. These poor wretches were driven on by blows from musket-barrels and prods from pikes, and the air was filled with the sounds of lamentation. The fair Spaniard had endeavoured to pay the money for her ransom. She had entrusted two priests with the knowledge of a secret hoard, but these creatures had taken the money and employed it in ransoming their own friends. Morgan soon brought them to book. He dismissed the lady at once, and carried the monks on to Chagres till their ransom was paid.

Now comes a portion of the story which strips the buccaneering character of its last thin coat of chivalrous varnish. There may be honour among thieves—I don't believe there is—but there was certainly none among Morgan's men. As an instance of the mutual distrust which existed among these brigands, may be cited Morgan's command that every man should be searched before the division of spoil commenced. To divert suspicion from himself he first submitted to the search, being well prepared for that ordeal. At Chagres he divided the booty. The murmurs against him now rose to a menacing height. According to his calculation the share of each man was only two hundred pieces of eight, a ridiculous dividend on the capture of a great city, from which every one had expected at least a thousand. The jewels also were unfairly sold; the "admiral"—for Morgan really held a kind of commission from Sir Thomas Modyford, governor of Jamaica—and his cabal buying them very cheap. Matters had now assumed a threatening aspect. The French buccaneers swore

that they had been cheated by the English, and declared they would have the admiral's life. But he was equal to the occasion, gave them the slip, and arrived in Jamaica with the immense treasure of which he had defrauded his comrades in crime. The Sir Thomas Modyford mentioned above, who, doubtless, had a share in Morgan's plunder, was recalled, and the buccaneer leader himself was sent over to England; when, backed by his commission, he could hardly be hanged, and, as an alternative, was knighted and sent out to Jamaica as commissioner of the Admiralty. Here it would seem he married and lived in great wealth and splendour, not, however, without having his ears assailed from time to time by the menacing voices of his swindled comrades, who swore to be even with him, and laid unsuccessful plots to destroy him. The wonder is that, among so many desperadoes, not one could be found to pistol him. The buccaneers delayed their revenge too long, for, in 1680, Sir Henry Morgan was left in Jamaica by Lord Carlisle as deputy-governor, and signalised his reign by hanging every buccaneer he could catch. In the reign of James the Second the notorious knight was thrown into prison, where he remained for three years. On his release he disappears from history. Whether he died full of years and dignity, or like a dog as he deserved, there is no evidence to show.

KEANE MALCOMBE'S PUPIL.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER VI.

PATIENTLY waiting till the first torrent of my grief has spent itself, and I am lying back weak and exhausted, but once more calm, upon my pillow, Nannie says, with an anxious, troubled look upon her face:

"I'd be well pleased if the minister was back, Miss Mabel."

Thinking that the kindly creature, seeing how sorely I am in need of help and comfort, longs for my master to be at hand, I make no reply beyond a deep sigh, as I think of that faithful friend, absent when most needed; but her next words put me to shame for the selfishness born of sorrow.

"It's the mistress I'm thinking of; there's some change over her I don't like the looks of."

"Oh, Nannie!"

And I start to my feet, and make for the door, every selfish grief forgotten for the time being, in anxious dread of evil

to the one creature Heaven seems to have left me. But the door is quickly shut and locked, and Nannie points with indignant finger to the looking-glass. "Lord's sake!" she says, "Miss Mabel, do you want to frighten the mistress clean daft wi' the sight of sic a face as that, and she in mortal sickness, and easy scared!"

She draws me opposite the looking-glass, where I see reflected a woe-begone, dishevelled, white-faced, red-eyed woman, certainly no fit object to enter a sick-room.

Some women require a long time to efface the trace of tears. I don't. Perhaps this is in consequence of my having little or no bloom and colour to lose, a fact upon which my candid friend Mrs. Vandaleur was once kind enough to remark. Plenty of cold water soon renders my appearance less appalling, and Nannie seems inclined to unbar the door, and let me go to our poor sufferer. But I want to understand plainly the extent of her fears.

"You don't think," I say, looking pleadingly into my companion's face, "that Auntie is very much worse to-day? You don't think——" But here it is difficult to put my thought into words, and I stop.

"I think the Lord's going to take her to himself, Miss Mabel; and it's best to say the truth out, and have done with it. I'd be blithe to say cheerier words, if I dared; but there's that look upon her face, that tells me she's not long to bide wi' us. Don't 'ee greet again, dearie—don't 'ee!" for I have covered my face with my hands, not to "greet," as Nannie thinks, but to pray for strength to bear this new pain.

As I enter the quiet room, where the shaded lamp casts a soft light on the worn face upon the pillow, and the thin restless hands moving uneasily on the coverlet, my heart fails me; for gathering round the eyes and mouth is that strange grey shade, which I know to be the livery of death.

"Is that you, dearie?" says the feeble voice. "It seems a long time since you were here, and I've no' been feeling just well at all; but I knew the boy Donald was with you, and I would not let Nannie call for you."

Such a sense of all I am about to lose in her—such a sense of the loneliness that will be for me, when that feeble voice is hushed, never more on earth to speak such words of tenderness—comes over me, that I throw myself upon my knees beside the bed, and cast my arms about the poor weak frame, while the tears stream from my eyes.

Auntie does not seem surprised or distressed at this outbreak; she lays her hand upon my head, and speaks comfortingly to me, as though I were again the child of old days, weeping over some childish trouble.

"Don't be greeting sae sair," she says; "it's bad to pull too hard against the Lord's will." And then, as my sobs grow quiet: "I'm glad we've found out how well we love each other, before I leave you, child. My hard Scotch ways might well have made you think I had no lovingness in me; but you know better now, don't you, dearie?"

I have but time to press a fond kiss on the dear worn face, when Nannie's teatray bumps gently against the door, and the scones make their appearance, together with a tiny china cup of rich cream.

"Try and taste a bit, if you please, mistress?" says Nannie, with a furtive scowl at my tear-stained face; "you're weak for want of food, and here's Miss Mabel never had no tea! But it's hot and ready in the parlour below." Here Nannie looks at me, and hesitates a moment. "Mistress Forsythe is below-stairs, too; she's called to ask for the mistress, hearing she was no' just so weel the day."

This last assertion is a piece of pure invention on Nannie's part, as I discover on entering the room where Donald's mother waits me. She makes no inquiry after Auntie, and is indeed evidently unaware of her increased illness; and one glance at her face is enough to tell me what has brought her to Whitegates at such an unusual hour. But dreading to enter upon the subject foremost in my thoughts and hers, I take a hurried refuge in the commonplace, and express my surprise at her being out so late, alone.

"I did not come alone," she says, "except from the gate."

And a shiver runs through me, for I know that Donald has turned away from Whitegates, like some stranger.

There is silence again, and Mrs. Forsythe turns very pale, and the hand that she rests on the mantelshelf trembles. I feel that the evil moment is to be deferred no longer, when suddenly the door opens, and Nannie, evidently in sore trouble of mind, stands before us.

"The mistress wants you, Mistress Forsythe," she says, her lips twitching nervously as she speaks. "She's very low, and easy troubled, and set on seeing you, this directly minute." Then

poor faithful Nannie steals inside, and softly closes the door. "For the Lord's dear sake," she says, standing close to Mrs. Forsythe, and looking pleadingly in her face, "say nothing to trouble the poor boddie to-night; she's sair stricken, sair stricken, my lady;" and before either of us can say a word, Nannie is gone.

"Is this so, Mab? I am so sorry! I did not know there was any change for the worse," says Mrs. Forsythe. And I, standing between her and the door, take courage, and speak what is in my mind:

"Yes, it is true, Auntie is very ill—so ill that I think the end is near. She knows nothing—nothing of—what I have to trouble me; and I beg of you—dear Mrs. Forsythe, I entreat of you, by the memory of our old friendship—help me in keeping the knowledge of it away from her!"

She seems touched to some new, strange pity, as I speak.

"Yours is a brave heart, Mabel; why have you let it be uncandid towards me? Why——"

But I interrupt her hurriedly.

"Come and see Auntie now, and after I will walk part way home with you."

Auntie is excited by seeing Mrs. Forsythe. "I seem to have a new strength to-night," she says, a flickering pink flush upon her cheek; "but the day's been a wearisome time. It was kind of you, Mistress Forsythe, to call and ask for me so readily. Ah! truly I thank Heaven to leave my poor child here in such good hands! You and the boy Donald will eye watch over her tenderly; it's just a 'tower of strength' to me in my weakness to think of that!" I cast an imploring look at the grave face of Donald's mother, and then she answers, "Mab will never be without friends, Miss Fraser; but I think no one can ever replace your love and tenderness to your adopted child!" Ah me! how my aching heart echoes the truth of her words! Never, never more, shall I find such love as that which is drifting from me now!

It is a bright, chill autumn night, and as Mrs. Forsythe and I walk down the avenue, I am glad to draw the "grey cloud" I have picked up in the hall closely around me. Perhaps, however, my feeling of cold arises from nervous agitation; silence is so trying when we know some dreaded words are to be spoken; and my companion maintains a silence I dare not, and cannot, break.

At length we cross the stile, and enter the Abbeylands fields.

The white mist lies low, and above it

the moon sails in a sea of dark blue sky. Our dresses rustle against the short crisp stubble that is all the sickle has left of the waving grain, and the corn-crake keeps up its harsh, monotonous, grating cry, as if "keening" over the fields shorn of their golden glory.

Now Mrs. Forsythe speaks, and her voice has a troubled, faltering sound.

"Child! don't you think I feel for you? don't you think my heart is aching for you, even when most I feel that it is best to be as it is—best for you, and best for Donald?"

I am in no mood to spare myself, so I say, in a hard cold voice, that covers an awful stab of pain at her last words:

"You said I had been uncandid. To whom, and when, have I been so?"

I step before her, and stand defiant in her path, so that she cannot choose but stop short. In the same sad voice, and without being roused to any resentment by my defiant manner, she answers me:

"I have often thought lately, Mabel, of some lines you once read to me long ago—

Dead love may live again; but through all time
No mason can up-build the fallen tower
Of trust.

It has been so with you and me. When first I was told that you had given your confidence to a stranger, had spoken of me and mine, and earnestly entreated that what you had said might be religiously kept from me, I suffered—I suffered intensely; for, Mabel, I have loved you very dearly."

All my defiant humour is gone. I am trembling, as I see the net that is round me. I seem to hear a soft, false, lying voice say, "I will respect your confidence, dear child!"

"When first Mrs. Vandaleur—for I do not deal in mystery, and am speaking in a full, and, maybe, last confidence to you—told me of what you had said to her, she did so in pure kindness of heart, wishing to let me know that you were troubled with sensitive fears as to my full approbation of my son's choice; and with genuine distress she saw the view I took of what was, to me, so unseemly a confidence on your part."

Such a vivid picture of Mrs. Vandaleur's "distress" comes into my mind, that I can hardly keep down an hysterical and painful laugh. Evidently troubled by my strange silence, Mrs. Forsythe speaks appealingly:

"Why could you not trust me, Queenie? Why did you desecrate our friendship by

speaking of my inmost thoughts to a stranger? Have you no explanation to give me?"

"No, none!" and I clasp my hands tightly together, and look up into her face, "I have nothing to say—not a single word to say—about Mrs. Vandaleur, or anything she may have told you. I have done you no wrong—or your son either. I have given him up—given him up, though it has torn my heart out to do so, because I saw that his love was mine no longer. And now, let me go, and let the past lie; it hurts too much, this bringing up of things that are dead."

"Poor child! poor child!" she says, for my voice has become a moan of pain, and the tears fall down her face. And thus I see her, for the last time, and take her hand, and hold it against my bosom; then let it fall, and speed through the fields. I reach the white gate, pass up the avenue, and there, at the open door, stands my master—my master, whom I think to be miles away from us and all our troubles!

The joyous exclamation of welcome dies upon my lips, for on Keane Malcombe's face is a strange look of awe and grief.

"Come quickly, child!" he says, half leading, half carrying me up the stairs. "Her life may be measured by minutes now!"

Supported in Nannie's arms, a grey pallor on her face, each breath drawn with labour and pain, Aunt Janet's eyes are turned fondly and expectantly to the door, looking for the child of her love. The excitement of Mrs. Forsythe's visit, and the unexpected arrival of the minister, may have tried her feeble strength too sorely. Be this as it may, she had scarcely greeted my master, when a sudden faintness and exhaustion had come on; and leaving poor troubled Nannie with her mistress, he had hurried downstairs to search for me.

I fling myself on my knees by the bed, and she raises her feeble arm to put it about my neck.

"Oh speak to me! speak to me, dear, before you leave me!" I cry, half beside myself with grief. But Auntie will never speak to me again; the power of speech is gone, and only in the faint pressure of her hand, and in the gaze of the dying eyes that never cease to look upon my face, can I read the loving, tender thoughts that are in her heart for me.

I hear my master's voice begin the prayer that Christ taught, but I do not

join in it; I am watching every passing change on the dear face so close to mine.

"Thy kingdom come!"

As the words pass my master's lips, I see that Auntie is looking at me no more, and that for her God's kingdom has already come!

All the flowers were dead when Auntie died. There were no roses to put into her cold hands, no violets to lay upon her breast; but tears fall on her still white face, and Nannie and I watch by turn in the darkened room till the cold chill morning, when they take my dead from me, and I am left alone at silent, desolate Whitegates.

The very day after Auntie's funeral, strange news comes to the village of the "great folks" up at Abbeylands.

Sir Ralph Forsythe, Donald's rich and childless uncle, has died suddenly, and Donald inherits his vast estate "down south," whither the heir is summoned with all speed.

The village is bewildered by so many important events happening at one time; and the chief gossip of the place, one Sandy Sim, complains to Nannie of such an untoward glut of news, "the noo," when, at other seasons, hardly as much is going as will give material for a "tidy crack wi' a neebor, mak' as muckle of it as a boddie may!"

Aunt Janet's will is also a subject of much public interest, for Whitegates, by the will of its original owner, passes away to a distant cousin on my mother's side; and not all the fealty of "the village" to "poor Mistress Fraser" can prevent many exciting and interesting speculations as to "what the new-comers may be like."

But even yet more startling news is to fall upon the ears of the community. The minister has seen some mighty learned English Doctor during his stay in those uncivilised countries which lie south of the Tweed, and from him has heard of wonderful mineral springs in some country "out of all calculation, ye ken, sae far frae Scotland;" and these springs work grand cures in persons afflicted like the minister's wife. And so, with the faint fond hope that his "Lizzie" may find healing yet, and one day wander again with him among the flowers and fields he loves, my master is to set off with her on a long and trying journey, and Mabel Meredith is to go with them. A new minister—a stranger, from the far North—

is to take Mr. Malcombe's place meanwhile; and what with this novelty in the way of a spiritual leader, and fresh inmates at Whitegates, the place will be in a regular ferment, and long winter evenings will be hardly long enough to discuss the many and varied points of interest and opinion.

That Miss Mabel is not, after all, to be "the leddie of the great hoose," is by this time an accepted fact among our humble neighbours; but I think Nannie is held in too great dread for many questions to be put to her, and therefore curiosity has to remain content with the bare fact.

All that Aunt Janet had to leave is mine—enough to spare me all anxious thoughts of the future—and when my master asks me to go with him and his Lizzie to a strange, distant land, I eagerly and gladly accept the loving offer of a home with them, for I have a ceaseless longing to escape from scenes that have been fraught with so much pain, and, alas! are to me haunted by the ghosts of dead joys.

The river will sing the same sweet lullaby to the lilies on its breast as of old, but, with no Donald to wander with me on its banks, what can the song of the river say, that is not sadness and pain? The sweet pink-faced roses may cluster about Whitegates; but through the window they frame, I may never more watch for his coming! Auntie's chair is empty, and her half-finished knitting lies on the little table by the window; silent is the voice that loved me, even when it was chiding my careless ways. Why should I stay where all about me are voices that, like the "sough" of the autumn wind in the pine-trees, only weep and wail?

In these days of my sorrow I am grateful to Mrs. Forsythe, in that she does not try to see me before she leaves Abbeylands, to go with her son to take possession of his new domain. I feel that she knows another interview between us would but be added pain, and could do no good; and I am glad—oh, so unutterably glad!—to be spared such an ordeal again!

Not so forbearing, however, is "mine enemy." Late one afternoon I see her, as I pass the turret window, coming up the avenue, attired in a dainty costume, in which black and silver-grey predominate; and I recognise, with a cold shiver of disgust, that this is what is called "complimentary mourning" for dear Auntie.

Thus I see her coming, mincingly, and I rush downstairs and meet Nannie rushing up, for she, too, has espied the

advancing figure. I grasp her bare arm in no gentle hold; I am weary, worn out by a long day's painful attention to those dreadful after-details of the loss of one dear to us, that make the eyes dim with weeping, and I cannot face Mrs. Vandaleur. "Say I'm ill—gone away—dead—anything; but don't let me see her. Nannie, I shall die if you let her in!"

Nannie's face is pledge sufficient, and I beat a hasty retreat to poor Auntie's room, leaving the door open, so that I can hear Nannie parley with the invader.

A soft cooing voice, with a suitable tone of grief, that renders it like a distressed pigeon, tenderly inquires after my well-being.

"Could I see her for a moment or two? It might rouse her a little, you know."

"It might rouse her more than would be good for her," answers Nannie's hard clear voice; "and it's nothing but quiet and rest as Miss Mabel wants, ma'am. She's pretty well, and only needing sleep, and she can't see no one—and is much obliged to you for calling to ask for her; and that's all the message."

"But, my good woman," persists the visitor, "you have not told her who it is. I feel sure she would see me."

"She did see you, ma'am, coming up the avenue, and she gave the message to me as I gave it to you."

Mrs. Vandaleur is apparently somewhat taken aback by this last piece of pleasing information, and makes no further attempt to storm the garrison.

"Give my best, my very best love to Miss Mabel, and tell her I came to try and speak a few words of comfort, and say that I am going to England in a few days' time."

"The Lord be praised," says Nannie, and after a long and unpleasantly suggestive pause continues, "for all His mercies! Miss Mabel don't want for friends or comfort either; she's going to foreign parts before long, with the minister and his wife; and I'm a-going too myself."

There is a subtle change in Mrs. Vandaleur's voice that tells me with what inward satisfaction she hears of my approaching hegira.

"That will be such a nice change for her. Say I shall be so glad if I can do anything for her."

But Nannie interrupts this effusive speech.

"There can be no manner of occasion for anyone to see to Miss Mabel while I'm

here, thanking you kindly all the same for good intentions, and wishing you good-morning, ma'am, and a safe journey to England."

I have a dreadful suspicion that Nannie, in her zealous ire, has "let slap" the door with more vigour than is absolutely needful; and a grim smile which adorns her hard features, as she informs me of Mrs. Vandaleur's departure, rather leads me to suppose this idea is correct.

The gloaming is coming on—that dim pleasant time which I used to revel in, and of which dear Auntie would say that no one but an "idle chiel" would be so fond. Tap, tap, go the long bare fingers of the rose-trees against the bay-window, and each gust of wind brings down a dancing shower of leaves from the tall willows on the lawn. My weariness of mind and body has reached that pitch at which complete inaction is a luxury, and the tired mind seeks rest from long painful tension in dwelling upon every trivial object that meets the eye. The firelight is struggling with the dying daylight for the mastery; and I lie back upon the low couch, near the window, and watch how every moment the fantastic shadows on the wall grow more distinct. Outside, the clouds are drifting, hurrying across the sky as if bound on errands of mighty import; and I can hear a faint murmur—faint only from distance—which I know to be the sound of the river, swollen with heavy rains, and rushing madly down the rocky falls below the bend, where the lilies lie in summer, and where my sweet-brier tree is shedding tears of scented leaves over the summer that is gone. I am weary enough to feel glad that everything is past and over; weary enough to ask for nothing but to be left in rest and peace—so weary that even sorrow itself seems sleeping for a while.

Is it not often—just when we are congratulating ourselves that the worst is over, the deep waters all waded through, the pain endured, and the time of rest come—that, suddenly, we have to bear the extremest pang of all? I have not heard my master's quiet footstep on the stairs; and he enters the room and comes over to where I lie, almost too weary to get up and greet him.

"All in the dark, my child?" he says, and lays a hand upon my head. I look up into the kind face, and there I see something that makes me spring to my feet.

"What is it?" I say, gasping out the words, and clinging to his hand with

the passionate appeal of one who has suffered so much, that further endurance seems impossible. I stand in the window, leaning against the wall, and wait till he shall see fit to tell me on what errand of pain he comes—patient, more from weakness than will. My master is not one to keep a sufferer in suspense long.

"I have had the boy Donald with me. He is in sore trouble—sore, bitter trouble of spirit."

A shiver goes through me as my master speaks; but I do not say a word.

"To-morrow he and his mother leave Abbeylands, and I have promised to give you this myself, and to bring an answer to the boy; he is waiting for me in the lane."

"This" is a letter. Now, during our short betrothal, I have had but few letters from Donald. It stirs me to the very depths of my nature to close my hand over the letter that Donald has written to me.

The fire burns cheerily, and I crouch down, after an old childish fashion of mine, upon the rug, and read Donald's letter by the firelight.

This is what it says:

"It is so hard to leave you alone in your sorrow, Mabel! Do you really, truly mean me to abide by what you said that afternoon? Only one word—one single word—'Come;' and I will be by your side, comforting you, or trying my best to do so. Let us forget all that has come between us, and be as we once were; I could not sleep last night for thinking of your loneliness and grief. I am waiting outside for your answer. Mabel! let me come to you?"

"DONALD."

Tears stream from my eyes; I kiss the letter with a passion of tenderness; I hold it clasped against my breast. My master watches me in silence.

At length my mad ecstasy is over. The letter is in my hand, and I read it again; but this time with a clearer vision. The mist is clearing away; I see the right path. We cannot put aside "all that has come between us." If I take Donald's generous, pitiful impulse, and build my life's love on it, I shall build upon the sand; for I know Donald loves, not me—not this weary, grief-worn woman standing in the firelight—but fair-faced, golden-haired Maud, his more fitting mate!

I cross to where my master is standing, and cling about his neck in an abandonment of grief. "Oh, help me! help me, master, to do the right! It is so hard—so

hard ; and life seems one terrible desolation without him ! " He holds me close, as a tender father might, and kisses my upturned face ; but now, as ever, the faithful voice shrinks not from the words of truth, be they never so bitter, never so fraught with pain !

" Child ! if you are sure that you are acting for the best—if you are sure Donald's love is no longer yours—then, ' cut off the right hand. ' Better so than to found your happiness on what has no reality. The boy besought me not to influence you against him, and I will say no more than this—be guided by your own heart. I have never known its voice unfaithful to the truth. "

Once more the tempter struggles for the mastery. I picture to myself what would be if I were to say that one word, " Come ! " I picture the old sound of the quick step on the stairs ; and then, the loving arms round me, my tired head resting on his breast, the dear bright face bent over me, his lips on mine ; but here the dread memory of that last passionless kiss comes like a stab—that kiss that was the requiem of a dead love ! I dash away my tears, and chase the dreamy firelight away, making the room a blaze of candle-light. Quickly I trace the words that seal my life to a loveless loneliness for ever :

" Thank you for your generous letter. I shall always like to remember that you wrote it, when my sorrow came upon me, and you thought I wanted comfort. All I have to say to you I said that day. May Heaven bless you, and all you love, now and always. "

MABEL. "

Hastily I seal my letter. Silently my master watches me.

I put it into his hand. Then he says, in a faltering, tearful voice :

" The Lord bless my child, and comfort her in her sorrow ! " "

So he is gone ! And I have a second time cast from me the light of my eyes, the glory and brightness of my life !

The lane turns round at our gate, and passes behind Whitegates, and the window of my room looks that way. In a moment I have gained the room, noiselessly opened the little casement, and am crouching on the floor in the dusky light, listening for Donald's footsteps.

There ! It is coming ; he is passing below the window ; he knows not that I am praying for him—" so near, " yet, oh, " so far away. " God bless my Donald—mine for this one short hour by virtue of

his pitiful tender thought of me in my grief and pain—mine never again, I know ; but mine to weep and pray for just this once.

Fainter, fainter grow the sounds of his footsteps.

I cannot hear them now at all. Listen as I will, Donald has passed out of my life, and my love-story is ended !

CHAPTER VII. FIVE YEARS AFTER.

I FEEL that it would be a very satisfactory ending to my story if I could tell how some happy chance threw me again across Mrs. Forsythe's path, and gave me an opportunity of explaining to her all the cruel misconception of the past, and set us once more " heart to heart and soul to soul, " as in the old days when we loved each other so well, and Donald—bright, boyish Donald—was so dear to both !

And it may be so some day—even in that day " when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed "—but not now, for death has made, long since, of our estrangement an eternal record. And of my own life, meanwhile, what shall I say ? It is too busy to be sad. The garb I wear is one that pledges me to hard toil in the byways and the crowded alleys of life, among the poor, the sick, and the fallen ; for I have become a member of a Church that guides her children with a firmer hand than the church of my childhood. Thus my life is not an unhappy one. It is the useless, the idle, the feeble, that spend their days in moaning over an irrecoverable past ; those who toil for a Divine Master could not see to walk in the way that He has set before them, were their eyes ever blinded by tears.

And Mrs. Vandaleur ?

One fair spring-day, about five years after Aunt Janet's death, I am unlucky enough to miss a certain train, and have to wait at the station for another. As I stand, looking helplessly at the clock—as though with a feeble hope that, by so doing, I can accelerate its progress—I hear a never-forgotten voice cooing to a porter about some luggage. Yes ; there can be no mistake, it is Mrs. Vandaleur, and about her are all the signs of great worldly prosperity. As soon as she sees me, there is the same fling outwards of the fat hands, the same ecstatic glance upwards as of old.

" It is you ! " she says, rushing towards me, as though her whole life, since we parted, had been one wild longing to see me again. " It is Mabel Meredith ! I should have known you anywhere by your

eyes, in spite of that dress. Dear me! I remember hearing you had joined the English Church, and turned nun. How very interesting!"

But I am looking beyond the voluble lady, to where a pleasant-faced woman holds by the hand a child—a child with Donald's eyes, dark-grey eyes with the black lashes.

"That is Mand's eldest," says Mrs. Vandaleur, "the young heir of Abbeylands. Come here, Theodore, and kiss the lady."

Theodore kisses the lady, and the lady kisses Theodore, calmly enough to all appearance, but with a storm of feeling running riot in her heart.

Hitherto words have not come to me very readily in answer to all the gushing of my companion, but as she chatters on, I see that cruel malice lurks beneath an apparently aimless torrent of questions, and I resolve that not by so much as a passing quiver of the lip will I gratify her wish to see me suffer.

"I am not a nun," I say very quietly, as she again animadvert on it being "so charming," and "so romantic," to find me in the sister's dress. "And I am very well, and very busy, and——"

"Happy too, eh?" she says, interrupting me quickly, and with her head on one side, as usual with her when aiming some tiny poisoned dart at a human heart.

"Yes; happy too," I answer, looking steadily into the steel-coloured, shadowless eyes.

"How nice that is! Of course you know that our poor friend, Mrs. Foraythe, has passed away?"

I bow my head in a silent affirmative.

"Ah! poor dear! she died with her hand in mine!"

I think Mrs. Vandaleur knows that I feel she is lying, for she looks away from me rather hurriedly.

"By-the-way, she spoke of you, not long before she died; she was unconscious most of the time after the—the seizure—but she had lucid intervals—yes—poor soul! she knew us all at times!"

I am trying to keep down my wild impatience to know what my old friend said of me, hoping that she sent me some loving word from her bed of death, but the consciousness that my companion is enjoying my suspense makes me hide all indications of distress.

She has told me that she and the child are en route for Abbeylands, and I know the North train will be up in ten

minutes. Will she tell me before that time is gone?

"She spoke of me, you tell me, Mrs. Vandaleur. What did she say?"

"Oh, nothing particular. She seemed to take Maud for you once, for she called her Mab; and on another occasion, when I was with her alone—she liked me to be always with her, you know."

"And being alone with you, she spoke of me?"

"Yes: she seemed to wish to see you. She said, 'Why doesn't she come?' and I was distressed, you know, that she should agitate herself."

"Naturally; and, to soothe her, you led her to suppose I was either unable, or unwilling to come?"

"Unable, my dear Mabel, unable;" and she laid her hand impressively upon my arm.

"You never told her son that she asked to see me!"

I make this remark as an assertion, not an interrogation. She purses up her mouth and looks wise, and gives the faintest possible shrug of her shoulders.

"Why—no. You see it would have been useless; and, indeed, she was never properly conscious after that occasion, poor dear! She is in a better place, and we ought not to mourn!"

"Yes; she is out of the power of misrepresentation now."

There is a silence, and Mrs. Vandaleur looks slightly crestfallen; then recovers herself.

"My daughter and her husband cannot tear themselves away from London while the season lasts; Maud is so much admired, and made so much of, and Donald is so proud of her being such a brilliant star of the fashionable world. It is really delightful—Arcadian, I may say—to see how he idolises her; it makes me quite sad, I declare, at times, when it reminds me of my own young happy days."

I make no reply to this tirade, and look longingly in the direction whence the North train will eventually appear. Mrs. Vandaleur puts on an air of gentle railery, and shakes a playful finger at me.

"Ah, Mabel, dear, I hope you have forgiven my sweet child her innocent supplanting of you?"

"I have not forgiven Maud, Mrs. Vandaleur, because there was nothing to forgive. Maud was not to blame, and I'm sure things are best as they are; I should never have been a star of the fashionable world, and am better where I am."

"Well, certainly; the religious habit suits your style of face remarkably well."

"And, what is of more consequence, the life I lead suits me remarkably well."

"Well," she says, giving a little sigh, as if the interview had somehow been not quite satisfactory, "it is altogether too delightful to have seen you. I shall tell Maud and Donald what good news there is of you."

I know, perfectly well, that she will never hint, in the remotest degree, at having seen me, and that she is lying with her usual graceful ease, so I make no reply. A few minutes more, and the train has whirled Mrs. Vandaleur away; the baby-boy, with Donald's eyes, being told to "kiss his hand to the lady," and obediently complying. And I, too, presently go on my way; not rejoicing exactly, but yet with a warm thought nestling at my heart—the thought that Mrs. Forsythe remembered me at the last. Who can say with what strange keenness of intuition the eyes of the dying are gifted to discern the true from the false?

My master has found a home in a foreign land, where skilful treatment and a genial climate have restored his Lizzie to such a measure of health and strength, as he had never thought to see her enjoy.

Thus the evening of their life is sweeter and brighter than its noontide.

Nannie is their faithful attendant, and seems to have got over her fears of becoming "just a wee bit scrimpit boddie," from feeding entirely on frogs—a penalty she had expected to pay for residing in foreign parts.

The faithful creature has never quite reconciled herself to my joining the English Church, and adopting my present mode of life. The first sight of me in my close bonnet and black dress was almost too much for her, and she was obliged to hide her face with her apron at intervals, and so gain courage for another look.

Perhaps the calmness with which my master took these various changes helped to sooth Nannie's troubled mind, for she said to me, just before we parted:

"Well, my lammie, we cannot a' gang to Heaven one way; and if one gangs in one dress, and anither in anither, I reckon the Lord won't take much note as long as the heart's right wi' Him."

Once, and once only, in all these long busy years I have seen Donald, and thus it came about.

My duties chanced to take me to London for a time, and returning, late one autumn evening, from a more than usually trying day's work, I noticed a carriage standing at the open door of a house in one of those fashionable squares in the near neighbourhood of which lie the haunts of want and vice—splendour and poverty, luxury and hunger, jostling each other in a strange proximity.

Inside the lofty hall of this mansion, just where a blaze of light fell full upon her face, stood Maud, no longer girlish as of old, but still passing fair. About her shoulders was gathered, in graceful fashion, something very soft, and white, and glistening, yet not brighter than the sheen of her golden hair.

She was smiling up into his face—his—Donald's! A moment more and he ran quickly down the broad steps, to give some order to the man-servant; and, seeing my sister's dress, with that sweet courtesy, ever such a winning trait in his character, he bared his head as I passed.

With head bowed low, with fluttering heart, and failing breath, I hurried on through the long lamp-lit streets. Ah, Donald! you did not know that it was Mabel who passed you by!

Thus, then, I saw my old love, and rejoiced with exceeding great joy, to see that it was well with him; but I pray that I may never look upon his face again, for the old pain stirs at the sight of the well-remembered smile.

A life that is full of purpose can never be unhappy, and therefore mine is one of content and peace; but far away, like a picture that I once gazed upon with loving eyes that grew tear-blinded, lies the memory of the summer when Donald Forsythe loved me, and the river sang its low song of joy as we stood by the perfumed briar in the meadow—the summer long ago, when my short, sweet love-story began and ended!

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,
AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK III. CHAPTER II. NOTES FROM MEMORY.
WIDOW AND MOTHER.

"To these terrible days, there succeeded a long time of which I need not make any record. It had a history, indeed, every day and hour of it; but one which is for my reading only, and which is written upon the living tablet of my own heart.

Should it prove advisable for me to send this present writing to Mr. Dwarris, it will be more intelligible and useful to him as a reference for the formation of his opinion and the guidance of his conduct, if it contains as little as possible about myself. I therefore refrain from transcribing in this otherwise fuller and more complete record of the memoranda which I have diligently, though briefly, kept, every observation which has reference to my own state of mind, and proceed to put in order simply those observations which refer to the occurrences, the facts, and the influences which have affected the history of our lives since the death of my husband, and the full knowledge of my own position which was conveyed to me by Mr. Meredith.

"In a short time after the interview which I have just recounted, I drew up a will, almost as short as that which John had signed on his death-bed, by which I made an exactly equal division between Ida Pemberton and my child, then unborn, and apart from any consideration of its sex, of all the property which my husband had bequeathed to me. I thought I could not go astray from what would have been his wish by doing this; and I added to the provisions of my will a request identical with that which John had made in his first will—i.e., that his brother-in-law, Mr. Dwarris, should undertake the duties of guardian to both. The document which I am now writing, and which, in the event of my death, is to reach Mr. Dwarris with the will which I have made since, and in the speedy expectation of my time of trial and danger, is written for the purpose of explaining why I have not suffered the will which I at first made to stand, and also the nature and extent of the responsibility which his acceptance of the charge, that my husband had laid upon him, must involve.

"John had no doubt that Mr. Dwarris would accept that charge, if ever it should come to be actually proposed to him, and I can therefore have no doubt either, though it must come to him, through my hands, burthened with a heavier responsibility than it ever entered John Pemberton's mind to conceive there could be attached to it.

"I now proceed to my explanation.

"I have not hitherto alluded to Ida Pemberton, my step-daughter, in connection with the revelation which I had to make to her father on his deathbed, or to the relations which subsisted between her and myself at that terrible time.

It is fitting now that I should fully define the latter; and I do so, remembering that this writing may, in time to come, assume the character of a confidential communication for the guidance of Mr. Dwarris, and that in that character it imposes upon me absolute candour and reasonableness.

"Ida Pemberton was little more than a child when her father married me. She was as amiable, bright, and affectionate as she was pretty; and I had none of the ordinary difficulties, which beset a woman who really designs to do her duty in that trying relation, to encounter. She had no instinctive dislike to me, and fortunately the servants did not inspire her with a feeling which I frequently observed to have such an origin. I loved her very deeply and sincerely, for her own sake, as well as for her father's; and I deeply and sincerely love her still, though there has come between us an estrangement arising from a cause which I will set down here. It will become, after a time, necessary for me to examine closely into my right to act on that difference between us; and in such an examination I shall still have the aid of my own intimate knowledge of my husband's mind and judgment to sustain and assist me.

"I may dismiss in a few sentences the state of things between my step-daughter and myself, which existed up to the time at which our return to England was decided upon. It was a very happy one, as everything which formed a part or a constituent of my life was happy then. Ida's father was devoted to her, and indulgent to her every wish, and I was of one mind with him in this as in every other matter. Ida grew up rapidly; and I daresay it might have seemed to some people that the relation between her and me was almost of a sisterly character. Such, however, was not the case; there was in it a much graver element than that, which I carefully nourished, because of the difference in age between John and myself. It would not have appeared seemly that anything like equality should have established itself between so young a girl and myself; so that I suppose there was something incomplete in the tie between us—a weak spot which I did not suspect, and at which it subsequently broke. For it has broken, and as much of my mind as I can detach from the past must be given to the mending of it, if my life be prolonged, and, whether it be or not, to providing, to the utmost

of my forethought and my power, a remedy for the evil with which I feel the poor girl's future is threatened.

"My narrative must take up the course of events at that ill-omened occurrence, which was the beginning of all the sorrow and desolation which has laid our bright and happy home in ruins; the coming into our house of Mr. Randall, who had met with an accident at our gate, and proved to be suffering from fever at the time. I recognised this gentleman as a person whom I had known, some years before, in England, and I was alone with him previous to his death, and received his last confidence and instructions.

"When he was brought into our house, another person, also a passenger by the coach, accompanied him. This person was a considerably younger man than Mr. Randall; his name was Dale; and my husband and I had reason to believe that he had in reality only a very slight acquaintance with Mr. Randall, although, after he found that his state was hopeless, he claimed to have been intimately known to him. It was not until Mr. Dale, who remained at Mount Kiera Lodge to assist in attending upon Mr. Randall, had been there two days that I saw him, and during that interval he had been a good deal with my husband and Ida. Circumstances into which I need not now enter had prevented my meeting him sooner, and when we did meet, he did not produce on my mind by any means so favourable an impression as that which he had produced upon John. I may, however, observe here, that John did not continue, even before the matters I shall enter upon hereafter had occurred, to take so favourable a view of this stranger-guest as at first. Whether he thought him presuming, or unfeeling, or felt that he had been a little incautious in permitting Mr. Dale to remain in our house because Mr. Randall was perforce obliged to remain, I do not know; perhaps he had only a vague instinctive uneasiness. But there was something in his mind which prevented his recoiling with absolute incredulity from the very hazardous suggestion which I was shortly after obliged to make to him.

"Should this writing hereafter come under Mr. Dwarries's attention, I beg him especially to dwell with exactitude upon the present portion of it. It is a portion difficult to me to write, and it involves conclusions which may be entirely mistaken, but which have such weight and circumstantiality to my mind, that I could

not hold myself absolved from acting upon my intimate conviction respecting them as if they were proven.

"My husband had taken possession of Mr. Randall's keys, and had locked them up, together with the money—twenty pounds in gold, and some silver—and the papers which were in the injured man's possession; also his watch, and one or two personal ornaments of little value. The portmanteaus and bags belonging to the two travellers had been placed in the bedroom assigned to Mr. Dale. Of these arrangements I knew nothing at the time they were made, for I had unfortunately fainted on first entering the room into which the injured man was carried; but when I was told by my husband of all that occurred at that time, and of other circumstances which took place a little later, by another person to whom I shall have to make further reference—it must be borne in mind that I did not inquire into those matters until my mind was already possessed by a doubt—I took special note of two facts in reference to them.

"Firstly: Mr. Randall's keys were not placed in my husband's despatch-box in the state in which they had been in Mr. Randall's pocket. Mr. Dale let them fall on the floor in handing them to John, who locked them up, but observed at the time that the chain ring on which they were hung was unscrewed.

"Secondly: Two keys were found by another person on the study floor, on the following morning, and handed to John, who locked them up with the others in the despatch-box; and remarked to the other person that one of them looked like the key of a valise.

"These two facts are supplemented by the following circumstance, which will be found to lend them, I think, not unreasonable weight in the considerations which influence me in writing this narrative, and taking the resolution upon which I am about to act.

"It was not in my husband's study, but in Mr. Dale's bedroom, whither Mr. Randall's clothes had been carried, after they had undressed him, that Mr. Dale handed my husband the bunch of keys, after having let them fall on the floor. Before the other person, of whom I have hereafter to speak, found the two loose keys on the floor of the study, in which the sick man lay, on the next morning, Mr. Dale had been in that room,

and had been left for some time alone with the patient.

"It now becomes necessary for me to relate a portion of the instructions which I received from Mr. Randall on his death-bed, and before I had seen Mr. Dale. There is no need for reference to anything which he told me of his previous history, or to any part of it known to myself in former times. He was perfectly collected in his thoughts, and aware that he was dying, when I spoke to him about any wishes he might have to express, and the disposition of such property of his as had been brought into our house. He told me the following particulars:

"That he had been on the point of returning to England, after an unsuccessful career in the colonies; and that he would have sailed from Sydney by the next ship, had he reached his destination in safety.

"That his mother was still living, in England—a note of her address will be found at the end of this narrative—and that he desired all he died possessed of to be sent to her. That the whole sum of money in his possession was three hundred and twenty pounds, of which twenty pounds would be found in his purse, and three hundred pounds in a tin colour-box, in his portmanteau. He was quite explicit upon this latter point, and I already knew that the statement about the twenty pounds in his purse was correct. Mr. Randall was not aware that we had any intention of returning to England at that time, but he begged me to take immediate charge of one article which he said I should also find in his portmanteau—it was a case containing some old letters—and to transmit it to a person whom he named, with every precaution which I could use to spare her from shock, pain, or embarrassment in the receiving of the packet. He especially enjoined me to make no announcement in the English newspapers of his death, because there were but two persons who could be affected by the intelligence, and he wished those two to learn it with more consideration. Understanding that he alluded to his mother and the person to whom he wished the packet of letters to be delivered, I made up my mind that I would be, in the case of each, the bearer of the intelligence. This intention was frustrated, as regards his mother, by the subsequent events; but I hope one day to carry it out as regards the other person whom he named. When Mr. Randall had given me these instructions, he seemed suddenly

to remember Mr. Dale, and asked with much greater excitement than he had previously exhibited to see him. I went at once to summon Mr. Dale, whom I then saw for the first time. He accompanied me to Mr. Randall's bedside, and received from him a whispered communication. I did not catch all the words, but I heard enough to know that they referred to the money in Mr. Randall's possession.

"The next day Mr. Randall died, and, after his funeral, it became our duty to examine his effects, with a view to carrying out his wishes. I had made a note of the instructions he gave me, which I placed in my husband's hands. It lies before me now, and I transcribe it:

"Three hundred sovereigns in a colour-box, among the linen in my portmanteau. Send it to my mother."

"The valise and the bag, which formed Mr. Randall's luggage, were opened with the keys contained in my husband's despatch-box, in the presence of my husband, Mr. Dale, and myself, and the contents were apparently undisturbed; but they did not include the colour-box containing the three hundred sovereigns for which Mr. Randall had instructed me to search. I stated in Mr. Dale's presence what I expected to find in the portmanteau, and he received the intimation with an expression of incredulity.

"Three hundred sovereigns!' he repeated. 'You astonish me, Mrs. Pemberton. Knowing poor Randall as intimately as I did'—he had varied several times, as I had ascertained from John, in his accounts of the relations between himself and Mr. Randall—'I should be surprised, indeed, to find any such sum of money among his effects. In fact, I don't believe he had it.'

"He told me he had it, where to find it, and what he wished to have done with it," said I.

"Mr. Dale bowed, shrugged his shoulders, directed an impertinent stare at me, and strolled across to the window. He did not turn his head towards me again. A sudden, keen suspicion shot through my mind which would appear unreasonable to anyone, I suppose, but which seemed to write itself in fire before my eyes. I said no more; the examination of the contents of the valise was concluded. I found the packet of letters, which Mr. Randall had directed me to look for, without any difficulty. Then we left the room—the valise and bag had been removed to a spare bedroom—and John

locked the door. I was turning away to go to my own room, when Mr. Dale said something about his intention of leaving Mount Kiera Lodge on the following morning, and I did not make any answer beyond 'Indeed!' I then went to my room, and did not again see Mr. Dale. I sent an excuse for not appearing at dinner, and the next morning he was to leave the house.

"I explained my conduct and its motives to my husband that night. He was at first quite incredulous, and remonstrated with me upon my suspicions, urging that it was much more probable that Mr. Randall had been under the influence of a delusion when he talked of the three hundred sovereigns, than that Mr. Dale, with no means of access to the valise, even supposing him to be capable of such a deed, should have stolen his friend's money. Against this argument were the facts that I had found the packet of which Mr. Randall had spoken in the exact spot which he indicated, and that he had named correctly the sum which had been found in his purse. John was weary and depressed, and he said little. I am unable to state positively whether he ever entertained the positive conviction, that I did, of Mr. Dale's guilt in this matter.

"I record here, with the pride which I have always felt in every action of my husband's life, and every impulse of his noble heart, that he told me I should visit Mr. Randall's mother when we reached England, and, concealing from her the loss of her son's money, place in her hands the equivalent. Circumstances having since rendered this impossible, I have sent three hundred pounds directly to Mrs. Randall.

"During the short interval between Mr. Dale's departure, and the development of the fever which was destined to prove fatal to my husband, my attention was caught by an alteration in Ida, which I could not precisely define, but keenly felt. Whatever had caused it, however it had happened, she was no longer the same girl. It struck me as unnatural that she, whose happy life had been so devoid of strange events, or sad emotions, should have nothing at all to say concerning the strangers who had come, one to die in our house, the other to pass away again out of our knowledge. I might have explained this by imputing it to consideration for my shaken nerves, but that there was something in her manner, an avoidance of me, indeed, which my instinct told me had another cause. Fond and caressing as ever with her father, she was reserved and cold to me, and

I particularly noticed one departure from her former habits. She did not accompany me to my room, that night, for the customary talk which had been an institution of our daily life, never interrupted until the occurrence of the accident which had brought Mr. Randall and Mr. Dale to Mount Kiera Lodge. She put this variation on the footing of consideration for me, flitting lightly away after saying 'Good night' with the excuse that she could see her father was tired, and she was sure I must be, and so she would take herself off at once. During the sleepless hours of that night I revolved Ida's altered demeanour in my mind, and again a keen suspicion awoke, associating it with Mr. Dale. I made some cautious inquiries which revealed to me that Ida had passed a great deal of time with him, while her father and I were necessarily engaged in our melancholy task. I then endeavoured to draw Ida into conversation about Mr. Dale; but I found it impossible to do so; she evaded my attempts with a skill which was the result either of the simple instinct of self-defence in an inexperienced girl, or of careful instruction on the part of a man, of whom I felt an increasing—and considering that he had left our house, and that the fault must be our own if he ever crossed its threshold again—an unreasonable dread.

"On the following day my husband showed symptoms of illness, and I forgot everything in my anxiety for him. As much as it is necessary for me to record here of what followed has already been narrated, and I now pass on to the time when I was left alone, to bear the heavy burden of my widowhood, the care of John Pemberton's orphan daughter, and the expectation of my own child, to be born months after its father's death.

"For a few days Ida was drawn towards me by the intensity and pain of grief, which had for one so young, and so unused to it, the dreadful element of fear in it. She literally cowered, speechless, and dismayed, by my side; and I had to put a strong control upon myself, in order to support the untried young nature, which was perilously near a complete breakdown.

"With the subsidence of Ida's grief, however, I noticed the same avoidance of me which had excited my suspicions in the first instance; and, in addition to that, an attempt to get up differences of opinion between herself and me, which might seem to justify it. She took it ill that our return to England was postponed; and

when I explained the cause to her, she took the information in anything but the spirit I should have expected. Never had Ida given me reason to believe, during her father's lifetime, that the demon of jealousy lurked within her breast; but it was unmistakable, under the cold civility with which she congratulated me, that there was a jealous feeling towards the unborn child which might prove my consolation, and could do her no harm, unless indeed she had been taught by a miscreant to think of it as interfering with her. I could not bear the sense that this might be so, that the girl's fine nature could have been so warped; and I told her one day what was the last expression of her father's wishes, and how he had left me the independent control of all he possessed.

"She listened to me in silence to the end, and then, after an evident struggle for calmness, she said:

"I do not think my father ought to have left me in anyone's power."

"My dearest Ida," I remonstrated, 'your father had perfect confidence in me, and neither time nor strength for any subdivided directions. He knew I should do what he would wish, and I have done. You, and your sister, or brother, as the case may be, will share your father's property between you in exactly equal proportions.'

"She said nothing, but sat for several moments with clasped hands and down-cast eyes. At last she spoke:

"And supposing I were to die, or your child were to die—what then?"

"The question disturbed me strangely, because I felt instinctively the first clause of it was merely a make-weight, a cover for the meaning of the second; and the second was incomprehensible to me as proceeding from Ida—our Ida of the dear old dead days.

"I answered her shortly:

"In either of those cases, the whole would go to the survivor."

"She said no more; and I, too, allowed the matter to drop; but a painful effect had been produced upon my mind by what had passed, and from that day the lives of my step-daughter and myself became more and more separate. Ida gave me no overt cause for complaint, but she did without me, and she never accepted a suggestion of mine. When it became evident that our return to England could not take

place until a much later date than that which had been fixed upon by her father, I suggested to Ida that she might open a correspondence with her cousins, and thus abridge the period of waiting and strangeness; but she declined to do so. She knew nothing at all of Griffith and Audrey Dwaris, and she could very well wait until she should meet them, to make their acquaintance. I said no more, but this was not the only instance in which Ida showed a wholly unusual disregard of my wishes. I was in a state of mental and bodily suffering, which was, very likely, out of the reach of a young girl's comprehension, and I tried to be forbearing and gentle with her. I could not resist the suspicion that the change in her was in some way Mr. Dale's doing, and the time during which he had been able to exercise his influence was one of the most bitterly-regretted periods of the irrevocable past. But I counted it in with the past, and was living in the hope that the influence would die out under other, healthier conditions, and my husband's child be once more to me all she had been, when an incident occurred which scattered my hopes to the wind.

"I was standing in the verandah one morning, when Ida, mounted on her beautiful horse, Dick, came from the stables, and took her way slowly down the avenue. She had always been in the habit of riding about unattended in certain districts, and within certain limits, and she did so still. She did not see me; and, after she had passed me some distance, she drew her handkerchief from her saddle-pocket, and at the same moment quickened her horse's pace, without perceiving that something white had come out of the pocket with the handkerchief, and fluttered to the ground. In a minute more she had passed out of sight. I went slowly towards the avenue, and picked up the object which had fallen from her saddle-pocket.

"It was a sealed letter, addressed, in Ida's handwriting, to 'G. D., Post-office, Sydney.'

"I walked along the avenue, towards the gate, and presently what I expected happened. Ida came cantering up the avenue, bending in her saddle, and searching the ground with her eyes. She pulled up short when she saw me with the letter in my hand."

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